

“Scientific research informs us that animals think in visual images. If true, then the visual artist has an especially close kinship with his animal brethren, because at a certain point while painting, (and often when not painting) the spoken language falls away leaving only pure visual images.

As of today, I can sense no end to the limitless approaches the individual artist can take toward the human figure which is why it remains so fascinating to me. Occasional excursions into the non-figurative realm (landscapes, still-lives, etc.) serve mainly to increase my understanding of the figure while away, much like the traveler who gains new and greater insights into his native land after spending time abroad.

My first real taste of artistic freedom came the same day I stopped asking, ‘but is this art?’ Only then did I no longer care whether what I did was art or not. All that really mattered was the need to create and the realization that the creative state is our primal and natural state whereas the non-creative state is actually an aberration that evolved much later in time and is the one to be avoided.

This certainly doesn't mean we should repudiate the product of our creative activity like one of those Buddhist artists who spend hundreds of hours making intricately designed mandalas from multi-colored grains of sand.”

“They painstakingly maneuver single grains into place using thin straws and when finally finished, carefully lift and set their creations out of doors where the wind, rain, and sun soon erode all their efforts. The point of all this, we're told, is to emphasize the act of creation instead of it's product.

I use a very simple and unsophisticated approach to any drawing or painting I do: if I like what I see, then I leave it alone and if I don't like what I see, then I fiddle with it indefinitely until I do. The driving concern then is always, does it look right? This definitely compares with the poet who repeatedly reads aloud to himself his work-in-progress to see if it "sounds right". In both instances, the artists are arranging pulsations of light or sound that strike the sensitive eye or ear with noticeable results.

On a slightly larger level of painting, my concern is what must I do to make this painting work? The question here is purposely left open-ended allowing for whatever possibilities may present themselves. I then start with the most conservative solutions first before proceeding to increasingly radical measures. Thus, paintings that flounder repeatedly become test cases for some of the more far-flung technical or aesthetic experiments with mixed results. The hope here, as always, is to preserve an economy of learning where one gains as readily from apparent failure as obvious success.

On a much larger, macro-level of painting there's the compelling idea of methodically organizing the entire remaining body of one's future life work.* There are

definite advantages in doing so, as well as an urgency that grows in proportion with one's advancing age.

All of the mixed-media pieces on exhibit today were at one time included among my "failed" works stash, which really just means they required some sort of additional fiddling. The root problem was that my work had grown such excesses that it became crucial to reduce them. This was easy enough to do on newly conceived pieces merely by omitting the excesses in the first place, but what could I do with the more completed ones that failed altogether because of their excessiveness? Could I salvage them somehow?

The solution, when it came, was straightforward and simple: cut out the excessive imagery and discard it, which I did *without hesitation* and with such relish snipping, mixing, matching, pasting, and modifying that it quickly took precedence over my other work until I'd completed 90 to 100 such mixed media pieces. By then, my interest began waning ever so slightly and it is always prudent to move on to something newly challenging long before actual boredom takes hold."

The term "mixed-media," as used here, may include all or only some of the following: poster paint, felt pens, crayons, colored pencils, ballpoint pen and pen & ink. Encouragement to play with such "children's" media came while reading an intriguing anecdote involving the 19th century violinist/composer, Nicoló Paganini. Apparently, he was attending some sort of social gathering, a soirée perhaps, when he spontaneously borrowed a toy violin from the grasp of a child. He began playing, and his mastery of the violin and the music that issued forth were such that it left his listeners incredulous that it came from a simple toy.

* *The great French artist, Henri Matisse, and the Catalan painter, Joan Miró, among others, both mention in private letters the importance of organizing their remaining future work. Since definitive catalog raisonnées of the great easel artists seldom exist, (especially prolific ones with widely dispersed work) it is rather impossible to trace their organizational lines and patterns to any degree. The few raisonnées I've seen are essentially useless for serious study because of the black and white and/or thumb-nail sized nature of their reproductions.*

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